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ABSTRACT

Based on data compiled from issues of the American Library Association's Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom, this paper analyzes over 500 censorship cases occurring in U.S. educational institutions and public libraries from 1976 through 1980, and makes a comparison with a previous study of U.S. censorship covering 1966 to 1975. Information is presented on censorship attempts by year and level of educational institution affected; number of items censored by year; formats of censored material; sources of censorship attempts; reasons for censorship attempts; and titles of censored books, dictionaries, and films. A censorship index by state and geographical region is also presented. Eight tables and three references are provided. (Author/ESR)

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CENSORSHIP: CHANGING REALITY

by

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A ten year study of censorship occurring in the United States (1966-1975) was published in Library Journal in 1978. This article will update that study and compare the results.

This study is limited to censorship cases involving educational institutions (including public libraries) reported to ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom (OIF) and published in the Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom. It has been estimated that about fifteen percent of all cases affecting educational institutions are reported in the news media so the actual number of cases affecting educational institutions is much higher than reported here. This study however, should be useful as an indication of the current status of censorship through 1980.

Table I gives the number of reported cases during the five year period.

TABLE I

Total Number of Censorship Attempts
in the U. S. by Level and Year, 1976-1980

Year	Public Library	College Univ.	Jr. Coll.	High School	Jr. High	Elementary	K-12	Total
1976	11	17	0	36	6	7	21	98
1977	12	8	1	32	8	11	11	83
1978	11	12	2	27	5	5	15	77
1979	4	11	0	30	4	7	10	66
1980	20	17	0	31	4	12	17	101
Totals:	58	65	3	156	27	42	74	425

The number of reported cases had dwindled through 1979, but in 1980 a fifty-three percent increase occurred. This upswing came at the same time that the nation was experiencing a growing conservative influence. Such New Right groups as the Moral Majority were forming and making their displeasure known over such issues as abortion, the ERA, morality, and the decline of family life. Censorship was seen as one means to stop the rampant decay some envisioned as destroying traditional values.

To measure the extent of censorship in each state "censorship indexes" were obtained by dividing the percentage of cases occurring in the state by the state's percentage of the national population. The index
The average index for the entire country is 1.00. † for a state below the national average is less than 1.00. The index for a state above the national average is higher than 1.00. For example, Oregon has an index of 2.03. This means that Oregon reported slightly more than twice as many censorship attempts per capita as did Missouri (index 1.06) and twice as many as were reported on the average nationwide. Indexes for each state are presented in Table II.

TABLE II

Educational Censorship Index by State, 1976-1980

State	Index Number	State	Index Number
1. Montana	6.52	27. Michigan	0.89
2. Minnesota	5.76	28. Illinois	0.87
3. Rhode Island	5.46	29. Wisconsin	0.87
4. Maryland	3.72	30. Pennsylvania	0.83
5. South Dakota	3.66	31. W. Virginia	0.83
6. D. C.	3.13	32. New Mexico	0.82
7. Vermont	3.09	33. North Dakota	0.80
8. Alaska	2.47	34. New York	0.79
9. Iowa	2.47	35. California	0.75
10. Wyoming	2.23	36. Colorado	0.75
11. Oregon	2.03	37. Tennessee	0.71
12. Washington	1.78	38. Nebraska	0.65
13. New Hampshire	1.73	39. Texas	0.58
14. Virginia	1.58	40. Ohio	0.57
15. Utah	1.52	41. Oklahoma	0.54
16. Arizona	1.47	42. Arkansas	0.47
17. Maine	1.42	43. Florida	0.41
18. Kansas	1.31	44. Georgia	0.40
19. North Carolina	1.28	45. Kentucky	0.29
20. Indiana	1.23	46. Louisiana	0.26
21. New Jersey	1.19	47. Mississippi	0.22
22. Connecticut	1.16	48. South Carolina	0.18
23. Idaho	1.15	49. Alabama	0.13
24. Missouri	1.06	50. Hawaii	0
25. Massachusetts	0.98	51. Nevada	0
26. Delaware	0.89		

Leading the nation in censorship was Montana with an index of 6.52. Next was Minnesota with 5.76. In contrast to these states was Hawaii which, as in the previous ten year study, reported no attempts in educational institutions. If Hawaii is experiencing censorship, intellectual freedom forces there are not reporting them to the OIF or the OIF is not reporting them in its Newsletter. It is hard to believe that Hawaii has experienced not one case of

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censorship in an educational institution in a fifteen year span. Perhaps librarians there will be more cognizant of the role the OIF plays in tabulating censorship cases in the future, or come forward with a statement that no censorship indeed exists in Hawaii.

Another way of analyzing censorship patterns in the United States is to compare censorship indexes by regional library association as outlined in Table III.

TABLE III

Censorship Indexes by Regional Library Association

* 1. Pacific Northwest	2.22
2. New England	1.55
3. Middle Atlantic	1.20
4. Mountain Plains	1.17
** 5. Unaffiliated	1.07
6. California and Hawaii	0.71
7. Southeastern	0.65
8. Southwestern	0.61

* Canadian members of the Pacific Northwest Library Association are excluded from this study.

** The remaining eight states are unaffiliated with a regional library system and include Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

In this second censorship study, the Pacific Northwest replaced New England which had previously led as the most censored area of the country (2). Every state belonging to the Pacific Northwest Library Association had a censorship index over 1.00. As in the previous study, the Southeastern and Southwestern states reported significantly fewer censorship cases per capita than did the northern tier of states.

The conjecture would be then, that Southerners are less concerned with controversial materials than people in the North. It will be interesting to observe the effect of the New Right on censorship in all regions of the country.

Table IV lists the number of items censored by year. An unusually high figure is reported for 1977 due to an attempt to censor over 800 items at one time in West Islip, New York (3).

TABLE IV
Number of Items Censored

Year	Items Censored	Increase
1976	178	-385
1977	1032	854
1978	100	-932
1979	224	124
1980	198	-26
Total:	1732	

Books were the format most frequently attacked (1378) followed closely by textbooks (116). Formats of the censored materials are given in Table V.

TABLE V
Formats of Censored Materials

Formats	Number	Percent
Books (general)	1,378	79.0
Textbooks	116	6.6
Films	72	4.1
Newspapers	51	2.9
Magazines	35	2.0
Plays	16	0.9
Displays and exhibits	10	0.5
Courses	9	0.5
Speakers	9	0.5
Art works and reproductions	4	0.2
Albums	3	0.1
Radio stations	3	0.1
Other	26	1.5

Of the formats under attack, five affected printed materials while the others covered such non-print formats as displays, radio stations, and speakers. Most educational attempts were directed at curricular materials with the exception of films and school newspapers. Student newspapers came under attack because they printed editorials and articles without administrative or faculty approval. Pornographic films were subject to attacks on college and university campuses. Many of these were on campuses with religious affiliations where administrators felt the films to be contrary to the institution's purposes.

The sources of attacks came from within and from outside educational institutions. Sources from within were usually administrators who led 23.03 percent of all attacks. Outside sources were most often individual parents (18.33 percent). The sources of attacks are listed in Table VI.

TABLE VI
Sources of Censorship Attempts

Sources	Number of Attempts	Percent- age	Percent of all Sources
Within Educational Institutions			
Administrators	152	46.77	23.03
Boards of Education	73	22.46	11.06
Teachers	23	7.07	3.48
County and State Boards of Education	17	5.23	2.58
Librarians	16	4.92	2.42
Student Associations	12	3.69	1.81
Trustees	10	3.08	1.51
Library Boards	9	2.77	1.36
Students	7	2.15	1.06
Boards of Regents	3	.92	.45
School Regulations	2	.61	.30
Other	1	.31	.15
Outside of Educational Institutions			
Parents	121	36.11	18.33
Clergy and Religious Groups	38	11.34	5.75
Community Residents	31	9.25	4.70
City and local officials	21	6.27	3.18
Review committees	20	5.97	3.03
Community groups	19	5.67	2.87
Parent groups	16	4.78	2.42
State officials	15	4.48	2.27
National organizations	14	4.18	2.12
Police	9	2.69	1.36
U. S. Government Agencies	8	2.39	1.12
Judges and Courts	6	1.79	.91
District Attorneys	6	1.79	.91
Alumni	2	.60	.30
Unknown	2	.60	.30
Other	7	2.08	1.06

It is not possible to determine how many cases were brought to the attention of administrators and trustees by others. If administrators or trustees pursued the case they were recorded as being responsible for them. A similar situation exists with parents who often began cases after their children complain to them. Librarians were responsible for 4.92 percent of all cases, which means that they are not reporting self-censorship.

Clergymen and religious groups are now playing a stronger role in censoring items they feel are undesirable. Religious groups complained about such items as Psychology Today, The Lottery, Deep Throat, and a course in transcendental meditation.

Twelve reasons were given more than ten times for censorship attempts. The leading objection was to language; the next to obscenity. Most objections were related to sex, i.e. pornography, promoting sex, explicitness, and obscenity. The reasons are listed in Table VII.

TABLE VII
Reasons for Censorship Attempts

Reason	Number	Percent
Language	43	9.98
Obscene	29	6.73
Pornography	27	6.26
Offensive	21	4.87
Promote sex	19	4.41
Explicit	18	4.18
Profanity	16	3.71
Objectionable	14	3.25
Religious	14	3.25
Inappropriate	13	3.02
Racism	13	3.02
Unsuitable	12	2.78
Other	205	47.56
Total:	431	

TABLE VIII

Materials Censored, 1976-80

1. Go Ask Alice (1971)	10
2. Catcher in the Rye (1951)	9
3. Deep Throat (film)	9
4. Our Bodies, Ourselves (1973)	9
5. The Lottery (film)	8
6. About Sex (film)	6
7. American Heritage Dictionary	5
8. Of Mice and Men (1937)	5
9. Are You There God, It's Me Margaret	4
10. Catch-22 (1961)	4
11. A Clockwork Orange	4
12. Deenie	4
13. A Hero Ain't Nothing But a Sandwich	4
14. Inner City Mother Goose (1970)	4
15. Jaws	4
16. The Joy of Sex (1972)	4
17. The Learning Tree (1963)	4
18. Ms. (magazine)	4
19. Naomi in the Middle	4
20. Show Me!	4
21. Soul on Ice (1968)	4
22. Black Boy (1945)	3
23. Brave New World (1932)	3
24. Car and Driver (magazine)	3
25. Dictionary of American Slang	3
26. Down These Mean Streets (1967)	3
27. Flowers for Algernon (1966)	3
28. Forever	3
29. In the Night Kitchen	3
30. Manchild in the Promised Land (1965)	3
31. My Darling, My Hamburger (1969)	3
32. The Naked Ape (1967)	3
33. One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (play)	3
34. Slaughterhouse-Five (1969)	3
35. Then Again Maybe I Won't	3
36. Daily Texan (student newspaper, UT Austin)	3
37. Delta of Venus	2
38. The Devil in Miss Jones (film)	2
39. The Dog Next Door and other Stories	2
40. A Farewell to Arms (1929)	2
41. Father Christmas	2
42. The Fixer (1966)	2
43. The Grapes of Wrath (1939)	2
44. Grendel	2
45. Learning About Sex	2
46. Male and Female Under 18	2
47. Nightmares: Poems to Trouble Your Sleep	2
48. One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich	2

Table VIII, cont.

49. One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (1962)	2
50. Portnoy's Complaint (1969)	2
51. The Random House Dictionary of the English Language--College Edition	2
52. The Reincarnation of Peter Proud	2
53. Run, Shelley, Run	2
54. Speakers from the National Socialist White People's Party (neo-Nazi)	2
55. Tell Me That You Love Me, Junie Moon (1968)	2
56. To Kill a Mockingbird (1960)	2
57. Tropic of Cancer (1961)	2
58. Where Did I Come From?	2

Go Ask Alice is now the number one most censored book, surpassing Catcher in the Rye. An indication that this might occur was evident at the end of the 1966-1975 study. During the latter part of that decade Alice collected fourteen censorship attempts in the Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom. If it had been published earlier than 1971 it could easily have led in the previous study. Catcher however, continues to be highly controversial, although the average number of censorship attempts per year has decreased since the earlier study.

Of the top ten most cited materials, Of Mice and Men ranked number eight in both studies. The Grapes of Wrath, the other Steinbeck entry dropped from seventh to approximately forty-third. Catch-22 dropped from fifth to tenth place, as more films became controversial in educational institutions. The films About Sex and The Lottery are used as curricular materials. Deep Throat, the number three most controversial item, was censored when selected for showing in campus theaters.

Dictionaries were conspicuously absent from the first study, but are present in the current study: American Heritage Dictionary (number 7) and the Random House Dictionary of the English Language (approximately number fifty-one). This doesn't mean that dictionaries were not censored previously, but only that they did not make the earlier most censored list.

Books that seem to be gathering more attention from censors are The Joy of Sex, Our Bodies Ourselves, My Darling, My Hamburger, and The Naked Ape. Items that seem to be less controversial are Tropic of Cancer, Soul on Ice, Manchild in the Promised Land, To Kill a Mockingbird, The Godfather, Lord of the Flies, Nigger, Sylvester and the Magic Pebble, and Black Like Me.

In comparing this study to the previous study done for 1966-1975:

1. Censorship indexes of twenty-six states were higher than previously, while twenty-four decreased.
2. Although fewer censorship attempts were reported during the last five years than during the previous five years, more items were censored.
3. Books and textbooks were still the format most often censored, followed by films and newspapers which replaced speakers from the previous study.
4. Administrators and parents still led the majority of attacks.
5. Language was the most frequently cited reason for attacks, replacing obscenity. Language is often considered obscene, however.

Some may argue that the late 1970s and 1980, the time period of this study represents a slack period in censorship when compared to the somewhat more active period of 1970-75. But it appears that the early 1980s are developing into an extremely active period of censorship.

If such New Right groups as the Moral Majority cast themselves in the role as arbiters of public morals, the trend toward increased censorship in the 1980s may well become the problem of major import to librarians and other educators.

Conservatism may force educators/librarians to take stands on censorship in order to preserve their ability to work as professionals. Contrary to the McCarthy era of the early 1950s in which the forces of censorship had too few opponents, today's populace is better informed.

This means they are now willing to discuss subjects formerly considered taboo, witness media coverage of such topics as homosexuality and abortion. When censors attack they may curry favor with like-minded individuals, but alienate those who prefer to decide controversial issues for themselves.

Librarians/educators, despite the recent national move toward conservatism, are in a better position to fight censorship more than ever before. A reaction is setting in to the new McCarthyism of the 1980s. It may well result in a backlash against censorship that will thrust intellectual freedom into the forefront of a new age. Unfortunately, too few librarians/educators realize the opportunities ahead; too many are waiting for others to lead the way; too many have not examined their philosophy concerning censorship, preferring to let television shows and other media do it for them. Anwar Sadat said it best: "He who cannot change the very fabric of his thought will never, therefore make any progress". Educators/librarians should take his advice unto themselves rather than point fingers at their busy opponents, who are raising money to support their viewpoints at the expense of intellectual freedom. The very fabric of thought that we must change is that we as individuals can fight the censor. We can fight with less financial backing than the New Right and we can win.

REFERENCES

1. The information presented is a result of data compiled from all issues of the Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom published by ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom 1976-May 1981.
2. Woods, L. B. "For Sex: See Librarian." Library Journal 103 (1 September 1978): 1563-66.
3. Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom 26 (November 1977): 155.